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ABSTRACT

The Political Literacy and Civic Education (PLACE) project in Kroo Bay, Freetown, Sierra Leone, was developed to enable people, through functional literacy and civic education, to participate in the processes of good governance by exercising their rights, duties, and obligations in an informed and responsible manner. The project suggests a curriculum based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be acquired, in the context of the need for political development and in the face of previous poor economic development policies. A framework for developing a political literacy and civic education curriculum is suggested, with the concepts to be taught related to instructional and possible lesson topics in an integrated approach. A model for facilitating curriculum is provided. It focuses on the learner and advocates an integrated approach to instruction. A list of eight suggestions for further reading also is included. (KC)

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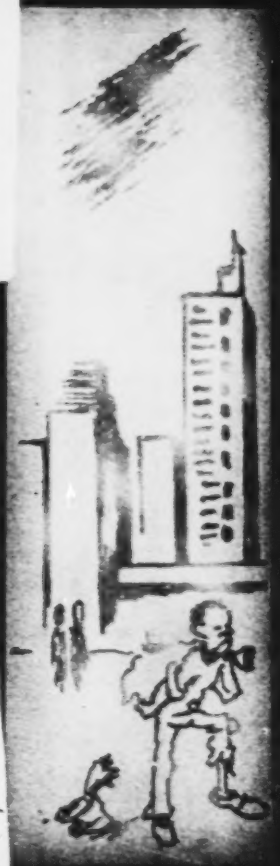

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POLITICAL LITERACY and CIVIC EDUCATION

An Intergrated Approach

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POLITICAL LITERACY

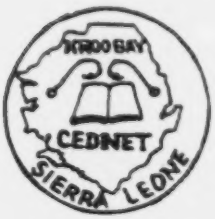
AND

CIVIC EDUCATION

CURRICULUM

An Integrated Approach

EKUNDAYO J.D. THOMPSON



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To all those in the struggle
for good governance in Africa

"Only the educated are free"
(Epicteus 330 B.C.)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements i

Foreword ii

Introduction iii

Rationale for Politcal Literacy and Civic Education 1

Focus of the Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum 2

Knowledge Required 2

Attitudes and values to be developed 3

Skills to be acquired 3

Context of the Curriculum 4

Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone 4

Political underdevelopement 4

Conditions for political development 4

Economic underdevelopment in Sierra Leone 4

Poor economic development policies 5

Cultural Development 7

Framework for developing a Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum 8

Why literacy? 8

Curriculum Facilitation 11

Developing a Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum: Some Issues to Ponder 13

Meaning of "Curriculum" 13

Suggestions for further reading 16

References 17

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The people of Kroo Bay and the Kroo Bay Community Education and Development Network (Kroo Bay CEDNET) wish to express their sincere appreciation for the support.

Foreword

This monograph is the first in a series which will emerge out of the Political Literacy and Civic Education (PLACE) Project, which is being implemented in Kroo Bay, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The Project was conceived against the background of the traumatic and horrendous process of UNDERDEVELOPMENT characterised by large-scale political and economic mis-management, state corruption, violation of people's rights and general inefficiency and apathy. Lack of informed participation or non-participation by the mass of the people in the process of governance, mass illiteracy and lack of civic consciousness were visibly in evidence.

The culmination of the process of underdevelopment was the outbreak of civil war which has resulted in widespread destruction of lives and property.

In the midst of plenty, evidenced by an abundance of mineral wealth and other natural resources, Sierra Leone is, paradoxically, one of the poorest countries in the world.

The Political Literacy and Civic Education (PLACE) Project seeks to enable people, through functional literacy and civic eduction, to participate in the processes of good governance by exercising their rights, duties and obligations in an informed and responsible manner.

8

INTRODUCTION

Political, social and economic development in Africa has been constrained in a number of ways, such as, lack of participation by the people in determining the nature, purpose and scope of development, being the most obvious. Lack of participation is both a cause and a consequence of tyrannies which have littered the African political landscape and wrecked havoc and incalculable damage on the continent and its peoples.

The destruction of the Berlin Wall which was followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union opened the floodgates of popular demands for democratisation and political pluralism. These demands resulted in multi-party elections in a number of countries. In some cases the elections were preceded by voter education in situations of mass illiteracy and ethnic allegiances. Africa accounts for a large percentage of the 1 billion illiterate and poor people in the world.

Analyses of voting in many countries show that voters voted for candidates who belong to their ethnic groups or clans. Rarely did electioneering focus on "issues", the foci being on personalities, regional concerns and distribution of "development", who gets what? became a major preoccupation. Election violence, resulting in hostilities among peoples and groups, exposed the fallacy of the ideology of "national unity" which was a dominant theme in the quest for national independence.

The fragility of the nation state and its inability to weld the disparate ethnic groups together using democracy as an instrument has brought to the fore demands for new forms of political governance. Issues such as minority rights, human rights, the rule of law, rejection of civil conflicts as means of solving political contradictions, security of the people in preference to security of the state have been brought on to the political agenda.

Rationale for Political Literacy and Civic Education

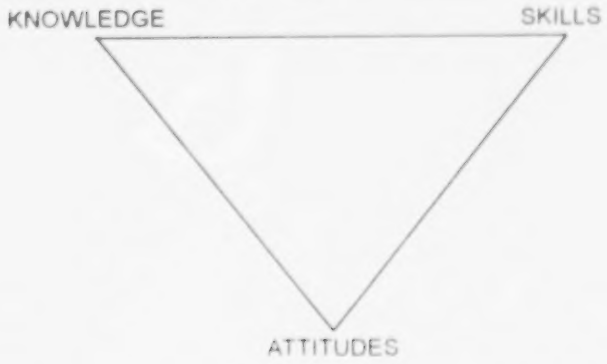
Democracy and multi partyism cannot be sustained without the full participation of the people. If government should be for the people, by the people and of the people it is logical that the people must not only participate but be seen to participate in an informed manner. Informed participation is contingent on knowledge and awareness of the dynamics of government, the processes of electing a government and issues on which elections are contested. Democracy means much more than electing a government; for democracy to be sustained the culture of democracy ought to be rooted in the psyche of the people and the body politic of the nation. It is for this reason that the Political Literacy and Civic Education (PLACE) Project was designed.

Political Literacy and Civic Education (PLACE) is a process of education which is not time bound or election specific. Its goal is to enable people to participate in the development of their countries in an informed, rational, and responsible manner. It is a sustained process of education which is guided by a curriculum or programme which guides the learning - teaching - teaching-learning transaction.

Political Literacy and Civic Education is learning about democracy; it is understanding and being aware of the rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities of the citizen/ individual; it is about participation in development; it is about being civic conscious; it is about building a nation out of the disparate ethnic, social, cultural, heterogeneous elements which constitute present-day African states. It is about constructing the defences of peace in the minds of people so that there will be no room for wars to begin in the minds of people.

Focus of the Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum

Fig. 1: The KAS Paradigm



Knowledge Required

The curriculum will focus on relevant knowledge that will enable people to contribute to the processes of good governance. Areas of focus will include

- The relationship between the Government and the Citizen/ Individual/People
- Effective participation in the political process
- Rights, Duties, Obligations, Responsibilities of the citizen
- Dynamics of government

- Building social consensus
- Developing a critical mass of knowledgeable and informed citizens/groundswell of popular opinion
- Issues/Problem Analysis
- Gender Analysis
- Participatory Democracy
- Role of culture in Development

ATTITUDES AND VALUES TO BE DEVELOPED:
Positive attitudes towards

Civic Responsibility
Collective wellbeing
Social consensus
Democratic culture
Concern for people
Social and Economic Justice
Cultural diversity

SKILLS TO BE ACQUIRED:
Participation in decision making

Analytical
Problem solving
Communication
Conflict resolution
Cultural renewal

Context of the Curriculum

Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone

If developement is the process of progressing in the political, social and economic fields Sierra Leoneans have made very little or no progress since independence in 1961

Political Underdevelopement

Between 1961 (independence) and 1992 (overthrow of he APC Government) military coups, political thuggery, civil war, dictatorship, acts of corruption by politicians, violation of peoples' rights and freedoms have characterised the political history of Sierra Leone. Politically there has not been progress in Sierra Leone, because the conditions for political development did not exist.

Conditions for political development:

- ☑ Respect for the rights and freedoms of the people
- ☑ Good Governance
- ☑ Participation by the people in electing those by whom they should be governed in **free** and **fair** elections
- ☑ Awareness and understanding of political, social and economic issues
- ☑ Freedom of the press
- ☑ Impartial and honest judicial and legal system
- ☑ **Incorruptible** Judges and Magistrates
- ☑ Literacy

Economic Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone

For a long time development was seen in terms of the growth rate of the national income. Factors such as income distribution, employment, health, housing and education were never taken into account. It was believed that the increase in national income would 'trickle down' to the have nots.

Sierra Leone has not developed economically. The backbone of the economy, agriculture, in which 65% of the labour force are employed contributes between 30 and 35% to the Gross Domestic Product. (GDP)'. There are several reasons for this namely, subsistence farming, rural-urban migration, inefficient methods of agriculture, the nature of the land tenure system.

Poor Economic Development Policies

The other reasons for the underdeveloped state of Sierra Leone's economy include:

- the oil crisis in 1973
- closure of the iron ore mines in 1975
- reduction in alluvial diamond deposits
- closure of the railway
- inefficient and unprogressive economic and fiscal policies and practices
- public debt
- lack of congenial investment climate
- lack of domestic confidence in the economy
- widespread official corruption and indiscipline
- political mismanagement
- the hosting of the OAU conference in 1980
- the evils of the one-party political system
- the growth of imports over exports
- currency (Leone) depreciation
- high inflation
- diplapidated infrastructure - roads, electricity, communication

Instead of economic development Sierra Leone has witnessed a very serious economic crisis brought about mainly by reckless political behavior.

In 1990 Sierra Leone was named the poorest country in the world according to the United Nations Development Report. Ironically this was poverty in plenty, given the abundance of natural and human resources including mineral and man power resources.

The following selected economic and social indicators would show the human (under) development situation in Sierra Leone in 1992. 1992 is significant because it was in April 1992 that the APC government was overthrown by the military.

THE HUMAN (UNDER) DEVELOPMENT SITUATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Selected Indicators as at 1992[2] except indicated otherwise

Population = 4.4 million

Life expectancy at birth	42 years
Rate of Adult illiteracy (15+)	76%
Female illiteracy (15+)	88%
Male illiteracy(15+)	65%
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita	$1020
Gross National Product (GNP) per capita[3]	$200 (1991)
People in absolute poverty	2 million
People without access to health services	2.8 million
People without access to safe water	2.2 million
Peole without access to sanitation	1.6 million
Infant mortality	144 per 1000 live births
Maternal mortality	1000 per 10,000 live births (1988)
Population per doctor	14290 (1990)
Labour force as % of total population	35%
Public expenditure on education (1990)(as % of GNP)	1.4
Public expenditure on health (1990)(as % on GNP)	1.7
Military expenditure as a % of combined education and health expenditure (1991)	23

Cultural Development

The importance of culture in development is increasingly being recognised given the fact that development takes place in a cultural context. Culture is defined as the sum total of the way of life of a society or social group. It is characterised by distinctive spiritual, material,intellectual and emotional features. Ideas, beliefs, knowledge and values are transmitted and inherited. These constitute the basis for social action.

Development is culture specific. It should be rooted in the culture of the people. It is endogenous and internally generated.

Forward-looking development strategies should, therefore, take account of cultural diversities, traditional knowledge and practices. The use of the languages of the people, for example, will not only enhance their participation it will accelerate the pace of development by the removal of language barriers.

If development is for people, by people, and of people it follows, therefore, that the people must define development. The uncritical acceptance of external cultural values is not only anti development it is culturally sucidal. Preservation, modification, transmission and utilisation of culture for development should be a key objective of development. Development must be culture sensitive because peoples' behaviours are influenced and conditioned by traditional values and norms.

Framework for Developing a Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum

The acquisition of literacy, defined in this context as the ability to read, write, count understand and discuss with critical awareness to enable informed participation in the process of good governance, is one of the objectives of the PLACE Curriculum.

Why literacy?

To understand the purpose and functioning of Government.

To understand the issues on which elections are contested.

To be able to vote in secret.

To read and understand the provisions of the Constitution.

To be able to fully exercise the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the citizen.

To understand the laws by which a country is governed.
To demystify Government.

CONCEPTS	INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE LESSON TOPICS
Political Literacy	To create awareness of the need for literacy in the context of politics.	The relationship between literacy and effective participation in the political process.
Illiteracy	To discuss the disadvantages of being illiterate.	The relationship between illiteracy and underdevelopment.
Civic Education	To examine the meaning, nature, purpose and scope of civic education.	Meaning, nature, purpose and scope of civic education.
Politics	To identify and analyse forms of political activities.	What is politics? Types of political activities. African politics. Political stability.
Governance	To discuss the advantages of traditional forms of Governance. To show the relationship between the people and the government.	Elections. Political Programme. Mandate. Governance.
Organs of Government	To identify institutions which promote democracy and discuss their roles.	Roles of the Legislature. Executive and Judiciary.
Democracy	To explain the meaning of democracy and discuss why it is important for social order.	Democratic culture (values, attitudes and behaviour that promote and sustain democracy). Constitution. Civil Society. The State. Rule of Law.
Civil Rights	To identify the rights of the individual and discuss how they are or can be exercised.	Human Rights. Civil Rights. Political Rights. Cultural Rights. Economic Rights.
Participation	To examines forms of participation; To discuss why participation in politics is important for good governance.	Political participation. Non-participation.
Civil Society Civil Tolerance	To explain the meaning of and role of civil society. To examine ways in which different shades of opinions and views can be creatively accommodated.	Forms and functions of peoples organisations. Opposition, Consensus. Tolerance.
Development Culture	To discuss what development is and what it is not.	Human Development. Social Development. Economic Development. Cultural Development. Political Development. Community Development. National Development. Social Justice. Poverty.

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CONCEPTS	INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE LESSON TOPICS
Development	To discuss what development is and what it is not.	Human Development; Social Development; Economic Development; Cultural Development; Political Development; Community Development; National Development; Social Justice; Poverty.
Political Literacy	To create awareness of the need for literacy in the context of politics.	The relationship between literacy and effective participation in the political process.
Illiteracy	To discuss the disadvantages of being illiterate.	The relationship between illiteracy and underdevelopment.
Civic Education	To examine the meaning, nature, purpose and scope of civic education.	Meaning, nature, purpose and scope of civic education.
Politics	To identify and analyse forms of political activities.	What is politics? Types of political activities; African politics; Political stability.
Governance	To discuss the advantages of traditional forms of Governance. To show the relationship between the people and the government.	African governance; Types of political activities; African politics; Political stability.
Organs of Government	To identify institutions which promote democracy and discuss their roles.	Roles of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary.
Democracy	To explain the meaning of democracy and discuss why it is important for social order	Democratic culture (values, attitudes and behaviour that promote and sustain democracy); Constitution; Civil Society; The State; Rule of Law.
Civil Rights	To identify the rights of the individual and discuss how they are or can be exercised.	Human Rights; Civil Rights; Political Rights; Cultural Rights; Economic Rights.
Participation	To examines forms of participation; To discuss why participation in politics is important for good governance.	Political participation; Non participation.
Civil Society Civil Tolerance	To explain the meaning of and role of civil society To examine ways in which different shades of opinions and views can be creatively accommodated.	Forms and functions of peoples organisations; Opposition; Coercion; Tolerance.

Curriculum Facilitation

The process of curriculum facilitation is expected to result in the following:

Knowledge on:

e.g. Literacy
Numeracy
Problems of bad governance
Problem Analysis/solving
Issues Analysis
Need for good governance
Participation towards good governance

Positive Attitudes to:

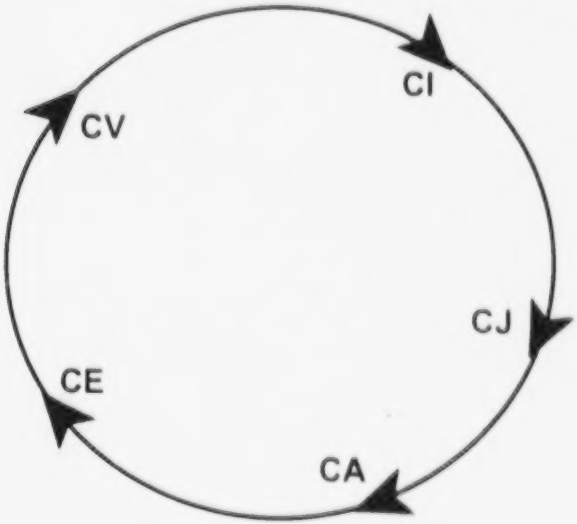
e.g. Civic responsibility
Gender relations
Collective wellbeing
Self-reliance
Nation building
Cultural tolerance

Skills

e.g. Problem/issues identification and analysis
Citizenship
Gender analysis
Communication
Participation
Advocacy

The following CF (Curriculum Facilitation) model should guide the process of facilitating learning in Political Literacy and Civic Education.

Fig. 2 Curriculum Facilitation Model



CI: Content Identification (What)
CJ: Content Justification (Why)
CA: Content Assimilation (How)
CE: Content Effect (What)
CV: Content Verification (How)

Developing a Political Literacy and Civic Education Curriculum: Some Issues to Ponder

Meaning of "Curriculum"

Some development theorists and practitioners, or workers are feeling qualmish about the use of the term "Curriculum" in the domain of non-formal education. In place of "Curriculum" there is preference for "programme"

While it is recognised that there is confusion and disagreement on the use of the term "curriculum" as evidenced by the range and diversity of the meaning of curriculum, there is no pedagogical or andragogical argument which precludes the use of "curriculum" in non-formal education.

A Curriculum is what is taught and learned, it is "a course of study" or a "subject".[4]

Determininants of Non-Formal Curriculum

Ekundayo Thompson (1995) identified the following key factors which, in his experiences, are the determinants of the non-formal curriculum.[5]

The Learner

The Learner is the major determinant of what is taught, how, where and when it is taught. The needs of the learner are central to the curriculum whose non-formal nature is determined partly by the teaching-learning or learning-teaching transaction which obtains.

Nonformality does not imply absence of order or structure or system. The non-formal learning process is and ought to be organised.

Approaches to Curriculum Development

Two mutually inclusive courses of study are the subject of this presentation namely, "Political Literacy" and "Civic Education". In their development two approaches are proposed; the first is the development of two separate units of study on Political Literacy and Civic Education. The second is the development of an integrated course.

The advantage of the **Separate Unit Approach** is that it allows for an exhaustive treatment of the learning needs in each unit of study. For example, political literacy will be situated in the context of functional adult literacy where reading, writing, numeracy and informed discussion and action are the main foci.

The disadvantage is that the Separate Unit Approach might lead to superficiality. The tendency to treat literacy as literacy per se with a sprinkling of politics is a possibility.

The **Integrated Approach** is preferred for the following reasons.

Firstly, the study of the subject will be characterised by holism the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is advantageous given the mutual interdependency between the two. Civic education cannot be taught and learned outside the domain of political literacy.

Secondly, learning needs of adults cannot be compartmentalised. The totality of the needs of the learner and their experiences should be harnessed for a worthwhile learning transaction.

Thirdly, the learners are living in an environment which is impacted by political processes and decisions. To enable them meaningfully participate in the processes which result in decisions which impact their lives, positively or negatively, they should viaualise the relevance of their learning in contexts which make learning meaningful.

To these ends facilitators are expected to sharpen their skills and deploy their tools if they are to participate successfully in the curriculum development exercise.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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1. GDP is the total output of goods and services produced by an economy.
2. Source: UNDP Human Development Report 1994
3. GNP per capita is the Gross National Product divided by the population
4. For a summary of the debate on Curriculum see *Curriculum Development in Non-Formal Education*, AALAE, Nairobi, 1995
5. Source: Curriculum Development in Non-Formal Education p.26

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